

## Merdeka Square



### Background to Kuala Lumpur

This brief introduction provides the context for the Heritage Trails, which focus on pre-war buildings. Kuala Lumpur had its origins in the 1850s when the Malay Chief of Klang sent Chinese upriver to open new and larger tin mines. They landed at the confluence of Sungai Lumpur (now Gombak) and Sungai Klang and established mines at Ampang. Later, tin mines were opened at Pudu and Batu.

This trading post was a wild frontier town plagued by floods, fires, disease and the Selangor Civil War (1870–73). During this time, Kapitan Cina Yap Ah Loy emerged as a leader, responsible for the survival and growth of the town. In 1880, in view of its strategic location, the Selangor state capital was moved from Klang to Kuala Lumpur. Nothing of this earlier period remains as all structures were of wood and *atap* (thatch) which were destroyed in the fire and subsequent flood of 1881.

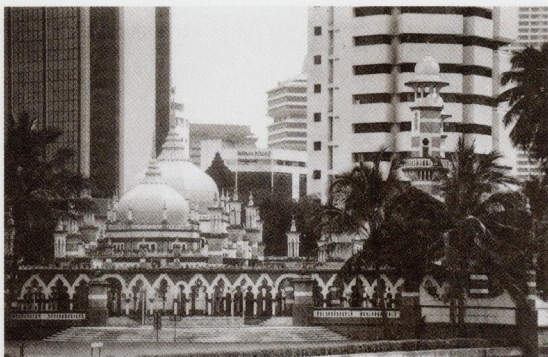
Thereafter, Frank Swettenham, the British Resident of Selangor who was instrumental in the development of the town, required that buildings be constructed of brick and tile. The advent of the railway increased accessibility. The development of buildings intensified in the 1890s so that it warranted the establishment of the Sanitary Board. In 1896, Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the capital of the newly formed Federated Malay States.

The multiracial community of this period settled in various sections of town. Market Square, east of Sungai Klang, became the commercial centre for the whole town. The Chinese congregated around this Square and south into Chinatown. To the north, across Java Street (now Jalan Tun Perak), were the Malays. Nearby, a number of Indian *Chettiers* (money-lenders), and in later years Indian Muslim traders, set up business. West of the river, the Padang (now Merdeka Square) was the focal point of the British administration.

Kuala Lumpur continued to grow despite two World Wars, the rubber and tin commodity crash and the State of Emergency (1948–60) during which Malaya was preoccupied with the communist insurgency. In 1957, the Federation of Malaya gained its independence from British rule. Kuala Lumpur remained the capital through the formation of Malaysia, achieving city status in 1972, and was established as the Federal Territory in 1974.







## 1 Jamek Mosque

*Masjid Jamek*

HH Sultan of Selangor officially opened Jamek Mosque on 23 December 1909 in the presence of a large group of Malays from all over the state. The Resident of Selangor, HC Belfield, and other officials attended the first part of the ceremony which was held outside the Mosque. AB Hubback, Government Architect, designed the mosque and other notable buildings of this period. The money was raised by subscription from the Malay community and Government funds. It was constructed on the site of the first Malay cemetery. This is the city's oldest surviving mosque, located at the confluence of the Sungai Klang and Sungai Gombak and set amongst coconut trees. Curved steps lead to the water's edge.

The design was inspired by Mogul mosques in North India. Cupolas and minarets top the brick walls and arched colonnades. Three domes surmount the prayer hall; the central dome is 21.3m (70 ft) high and is flanked by two lower domes. The prayer hall opens out onto a walled *sahn* (courtyard), which has now been covered over. At the corners are two red and white striped minarets 26.8m (88 ft) high, identical in design with *chatris* (umbrella-shaped cupolas, usually domed and open-sided) on the top. A large number of small *chatris* top the entrances and corners of the Mosque.

Until the opening of the National Mosque in 1965, Masjid Jamek served as Kuala Lumpur's principal mosque.



## 2 The Old Survey Department

*Jabatan Ukur Lama*



Built in 1910 to house the Federated Malay States (FMS) Survey Department, the building's dramatic 121.9m (400 ft) arcade is punctuated by two entrances, each with a twin *chatri* on top. Domed, octagonal towers flank both ends of the long, narrow building, accentuating the corners. Note the distinctive cinque-foil shaped arches that create a powerful geometric rhythm. Today the building

belongs to the judiciary and houses the Sessions and Magistrates Courts. However, it is still popularly known as The Old Survey Department building.

## 3 The Old City Hall

*Dewan Bandaraya Lama*



Built in 1904, this building originally housed the Kuala Lumpur Town Hall including the Auditorium, and Municipal Offices, each with its own separate entrance. The structure also accommodated the office of the Sanitary Board, which acted like a town council regulating most public services including lighting,

roads and approval of building plans.

AB Hubback was the architect and Mr Nicholas the contractor, who faced problems necessitating two extensions on his contract. Architecturally, it carries through the intricate design of the Moorish style and the five-foot walkways of the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. However, this building can be distinguished from the former by the pinnacles on its roofline.



Observe the beautiful lines of the domed *porte cochere* and the many versions of Islamic arches and *chattris* on the roofline. An elegant bay window can be seen on the façade.

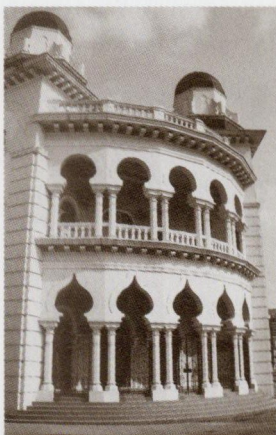
The Town Hall Auditorium was for many years the only theatre in town. This entire complex was later renovated for the various courts of the judicial system. However, it is still popularly known as The Old City Hall.

## 4 The Old High Court

*Mahkamah Tinggi Lama*

The courts were originally situated on Weld's Hill, approximately where Menara Maybank now stands. After many years of debate as to where the new Supreme Courts would be situated, and even if indeed a new building was necessary, this two-storey building began construction in 1912 and was completed in 1915.

AB Hubback designed and supervised the erection of the building and Ang Seng was the contractor.



Each of the distinctive towers is topped with a cupola that has decorative buttresses surrounding the base. A two-storey arcade of different types of arches, horseshoe and painted horseshoe, link the towers. Initially, the towers were used for dining purposes and housed private *tiffin* (lunch) rooms.

The public entrance faces the river and leads to a handsome inner courtyard from which a concrete double staircase leads to the upper floor.

In 1984, the Supreme Courts and some of the High Court's hearing rooms were moved to the newly renovated Sultan Abdul Samad Building. After a major fire in 1992, the building was rebuilt and now houses the Sessions and Magistrates Courts. However, it is still popularly known as The Old High Court.

## 5 Sultan Abdul Samad Building

### *Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad*



Although a plaque at the entrance declares AC Norman as the architect, RAJ Bidwell, Chief Draughtsman, is commonly recognized as carrying out the design. CE Spooner, State Engineer and Director of the Public Works Department, is credited for suggesting the use of a 'Mahometan' *sic* style for the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. This 'Mahometan' style, also known as 'Neo-Saracenic', came from India where several major buildings had been built in this style.

Construction began in 1894 and was completed in 1897. It has been noted that CE Spooner deserved special credit for having completed so important a building strictly within the amount provided in his original cost of 152,000 Straits Dollars.

The Sultan Abdul Samad Building was originally known as the new Government Offices and housed the Public Works Department, the Survey Office, the Treasury, the Post and Telegraph Offices and some of the departments of the Federated Malay States.

The largest building of its day, it is constructed entirely of brick, and what appears to be cream stone is actually plaster covered brick. The front façade is 137.2m (450 ft) in length with an imposing porch in the centre. The porch consists of three horseshoe arches, the piers supporting them being nearly 1.2m (4 ft) in thickness. The 41.2m (135 ft) central tower holds a clock that was first heard during Queen Victoria's birthday parade in 1897. This is surmounted by a copper dome that is in turn topped by a copper *chatri*. Two circular towers, housing stairways leading to the upper floor, flank the central tower.

When Selangor moved its administrative offices to Shah Alam in 1974, the building was extensively renovated to house the nation's judiciary.



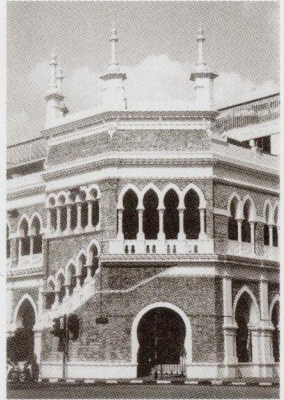
## 6 The Old Post Office

### *Pejabat Pos Lama*

Construction of the Post Office began in 1904, but progress was delayed due to the contractor's financial difficulties and the building was not completed until June 1907.

An arched walkway, which was added much later, connects the Sultan Abdul Samad Building with this structure. The styles of both buildings are similar, with wide arcaded verandahs of pointed horse-shoe arches. Pinnacles frame the central leaf design pediment. The many-sided stair towers flank both ends of the façade.

In 1984, when the Post Office was relocated to the Dayabumi complex, this structure remained vacant for several years. In 1991, the building was renovated for the Court of Appeal. However, it is still popularly known as The Old Post Office.

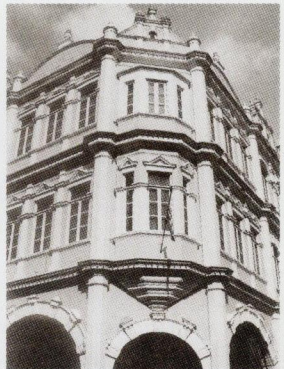


## 7 Industrial Court

### *Mahkamah Perusahaan*

This building on the corner of the street was opened in September 1905. In August of that year, *The Malay Mail* described the new block of three-storey buildings as “the handsomest edifice of its kind ever erected in Kuala Lumpur”.

Loke Yew, one of Kuala Lumpur's first multimillionaires and philanthropists, built this as well as the original Loke Yew Building adjacent to it. The design was attributed to AK Moosdeen who was also the architect of Loke Yew's elaborate shophouse on Market Square.



The building was occupied by Chow Kit and Co, a department store, patronized by the expatriates and locals alike. Loke Chow Kit, a contemporary of Loke Yew, was a partner of Chow Kit and Co, and a member of the Sanitary Board.

The three-storey building has alternating bay designs: the two-arched-window bay has the Flemish type pediment; while the three-square-opening window bay has a segmental pediment. Oriel windows adorn the corner of the building. Keystones decorate the half round arches of the ground floor arcade giving a sense of strength to the building.

In 1982, this building was renovated and now houses the Industrial Court. The architect for the restoration was Hajeedar bin Abdul Majid.

## 8 Textile Museum

*Muzium Tekstil*



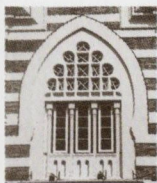
CE Spooner, then the first General Manager of the Federated Malay States Railway, planned and supervised the construction of its new offices. The structure, built on the former Selangor Railway Offices site, was designed by AB Hubback. The building was completed in 1905.

The façade is in keeping with the Islamic style of the adjacent government buildings. The distinctive red and white

banding is achieved by alternating fairfaced bricks with plastered bricks.

The main entrance comprises two pilasters that are topped by *chatris*. Take note of the interesting window on the first floor, with its unusual pieces of glass which have been set into the gridded fanlight. Two octagonal towers flank the entrance façade. On top of each tower is a concrete dome surrounded by smaller domes.





In 1917, the FMS Railway moved to its new premises opposite the Railway Station and the Public Works Department took over the vacated building. It now houses the Textile Museum.

## 9 National History Museum

*Muzium Sejarah Nasional*

The first bank to open a branch in Kuala Lumpur in 1888 was the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China. In 1891, the bank moved to its new premises on this site. The site was chosen for its proximity to the police headquarters on Bluff Road (now Jalan Bukit Aman). As the two-storey



building proved inadequate, it was replaced by the present structure in 1909.

The three-storey building was designed with arches on the ground floor to make the façade more compatible with the neighbouring Mogul buildings. Initially, there was a single-storey wing extending onto Jalan Raja. This section of the building was removed when the street was widened and arches were reproduced on the blank wall. The verandahs on the building have now been enclosed with windows. Take note of the four corner domes, covered with *belian* timber, a hardwood found in East Malaysia.

During the great floods of 1926, the bank's vaults were flooded and water rose to 1m (3 ft) above the floor. Business was transacted upstairs in the living quarters and the staff was transported by sampan to work. Later, millions of dollars of soggy bank notes were laid out on the Padang to dry, under the watchful eye of the police.

On 2 April 1996, the renovated building opened its doors to the public as the National History Museum with a permanent exhibition on Malaysia's historical development.

## 10 Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library

*Pustaka Peringatan Kuala Lumpur*



After the new Government Offices were completed, it was decided that for convenience, the Government Printing Office should be sited in the vicinity. J Russell was then the Government Printer. With his long experience in the printing industry, he helped the Public Works Department architects to design an ideal printing office which was

completed in 1899. A rare feature for a building of its time was the structural support system of cast iron columns and trusses, which allowed for a large open interior. This was necessary to house the large printing press machines.

The architectural style contrasts with that of the other government buildings constructed around the same period. The exterior is exposed brick with plastered columns and bay windows. The upper parts of the ground floor windows are half-circular and decorated with keystones. The gables at the corners are of Flemish design and are crowned with triangular pediments. Brick pilasters, plastered over and topped with garlic-shaped finials, flank the gables.

Interestingly, five-foot walkways and shading devices were not included in the original design. The canopy roofs were added in the 1940s and retained during the last renovation. The building was renovated in 1986 to house the Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library.

## 11 Merdeka Square

*Dataran Merdeka*

*Merdeka* is the Malay word for independence. Merdeka Square commemorates the historic event that occurred here, at the stroke of midnight on 31 August 1957 when the Union Jack was lowered



for the last time, and Malaya became an independent nation. Originally called the Parade Ground, it was later known as the Padang. The Square was the focal point of colonial Kuala Lumpur. Most of the buildings which surround it date from the turn of the century.



Today it is a beautiful preserve in the city centre with gardens, terraces and fountains. Beneath the Square is a food, leisure and entertainment complex called Plaza Putra, and a carpark. Merdeka Square is still used as the venue of many important national events.

A 100m (328 ft) high flagpole, reputedly the tallest in the world, soars above the Square. At each end are the fountains, new and old. The old ornamental fountain and drinking trough was ordered from England by the Sanitary Board. The fountain was to be erected in Market Square. However, the police objected on grounds that it would obstruct the flow of traffic and suggested the site at the corner of the Parade Ground. The fountain was brought in from England and assembled locally in 1897.

## 12 Royal Selangor Club

*Kelab Diraja Selangor*

The Royal Selangor Club was founded in 1884 as a social and cricket club for the growing expatriate community. The earliest Selangor Club building was a simple timber structure with an *atap* roof



erected near the north eastern corner of the Padang. Around 1890, it was replaced by a two-storey timber structure designed by AC Norman, Government Architect, and sited in its present position on the west side of the Padang.

The clubhouse was rebuilt in 1910, with a design similar to a mock Tudor house. The architect was AB

Hubback. It was at this stage that the two wings were added, on either side of the building.

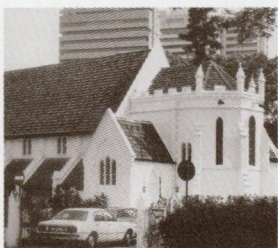
The Club was affectionately known in Colonial days as "The Spotted Dog". One theory relating to the origin of this sobriquet was that the Police Commissioner's wife used to bring her black and white Dalmatian dogs to the Club. Another more probable view was that the name reflected the mixed membership at that time, as opposed to the other clubs which were exclusively for the expatriate community.

In 1970, a disastrous fire destroyed a great portion of the building. After some years of uncertainty, the Club was rebuilt. Designed by Fong Ying Leong again in mock Tudor style, it was completed in 1979.

The Hash House Harriers, now an international body of over 1500 cross-country running clubs, was founded at the Selangor Club in 1938.

## 13 Cathedral of St Mary The Virgin

*Katedral St Mary*



The Anglican Church of St Mary the Virgin, consecrated in February 1895, was designed by AC Norman. The contractor was Mr Nicholas and the architectural style was early English Gothic, which is noted in the buttresses on

the outside of the building. In 1958, the rear of the church was extended to house the Jubilee Hall and in 1968, a double-storey annexe was built. St. Mary's was elevated to the status of a cathedral on 8 September 1983.

The original part of the building is shaped like a cruciform and can accommodate 200 worshippers. It consists of the nave which has an open-timbered roof constructed of Malaysian *merbau* and *seriah* wood, the apex being 132.6m (39 ft) from the floor.

The chancel, raised above the nave floor level is paved with tessellated tiles and lit by three stained glass windows sited in the octagonal end.



An interesting but sad piece of trivia about their history was that during WW2 when bombs began dropping on Kuala Lumpur, the windows were removed and carefully stored away. After the war, their whereabouts were never discovered and they were replaced in 1955.

Of special note is the window on the internal wall at the rear of the nave, donated by the United Planting Association of Malaya, in memory of the planters who died during the Emergency.

## 14 PAM Building

*Bangunan Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia*



In 1903, Loke Chow Kit built this townhouse and suite of offices then known as Loke Hall. It was believed that AK Moosdeen was the architect.

In 1908, Loke Hall was taken over by a group of Europeans who converted the mansion into the Empire Hotel. Later, the building became known as the Peninsula Hotel. The hotel was a favourite meeting place with planters, industrialists and local members of the great trading houses.

Thereafter, the building was left unoccupied until 1973, when Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (Malaysian Institute of Architects) became the tenant. PAM renovated and restored the building for use as a Building Centre and Secretariat.

The building consists of a main house and an annexe. The mansion is reminiscent of a

European-style villa. Symmetrical in design, it has a central entrance portico leading to a inner two-storey courtyard.

The annexe, which was one of five units of townhouses designed as a block, has a matching style. Ornate balcony terraces, made of decorative wrought iron, adorn the building. Notice the elaborate artwork on the Dutch gable ends and on the front façade.

## 15 EKRAN House

*Wisma EKRAN*



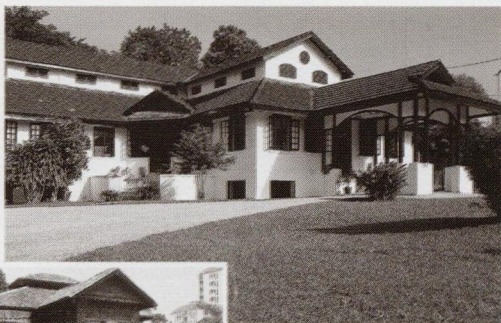
Designed by AO Coltman of Booty and Edwards, this building was constructed in 1937. Originally known as the Anglo-Oriental Building, it was later taken over by the Malaysian Mining Corporation. Architect Chen Voon Fee renovated the building in 1988 for use by Mahkota College.

The building is an excellent example of Art Deco

construction with extensive use of Art Deco elements and ornamentation, characteristic of the style. Situated on the corner of Jalan Tangsi and Jalan Parlimen, it has a double frontage of two asymmetrical wings. The curved corner of the building houses the main entrance. Two prominent pylons with flagpoles on top flank the entry. Projecting from these pylons is a concrete canopy shading the entrance. Observe the decorative grooved pattern around the perimeter belt between the colonnade and windows.

During renovation, the internal lower roof was replaced by a reinforced concrete floor. This created a usable space in the core of the building. A ring of corridors, which wrap around the three-storey atrium, links the internal rooms. The building is currently owned and occupied by EKRAN Berhad.





The Kuala Lumpur  
Heritage Trails is a  
collaboration between

Tourism Malaysia and Badan Warisan Malaysia (Heritage of Malaysia Trust). The Badan is a non-profit non-government organization. It was established in 1983 with the objective of promoting the preservation and conservation of Malaysia's built heritage.

The heritage centre of the Badan is located in a mock Tudor building dating from 1925. In the garden is a bamboo hut built by Orang Asli of the Temiar community and a restored Malay timber house known as the Rumah Penghulu. This was formerly the residence of a local headman in Kedah. It is beautifully decorated throughout with intricate carvings and has been furnished to reflect a house in the early thirties. A guided tour and viewing of a video documentary on the restoration is available.

The centre hosts regular exhibitions with a heritage theme and has a gift shop and reference library. Visitors are very welcome.

Badan Warisan Malaysia is located at No.2 Jalan Stonor, 50450 Kuala Lumpur.

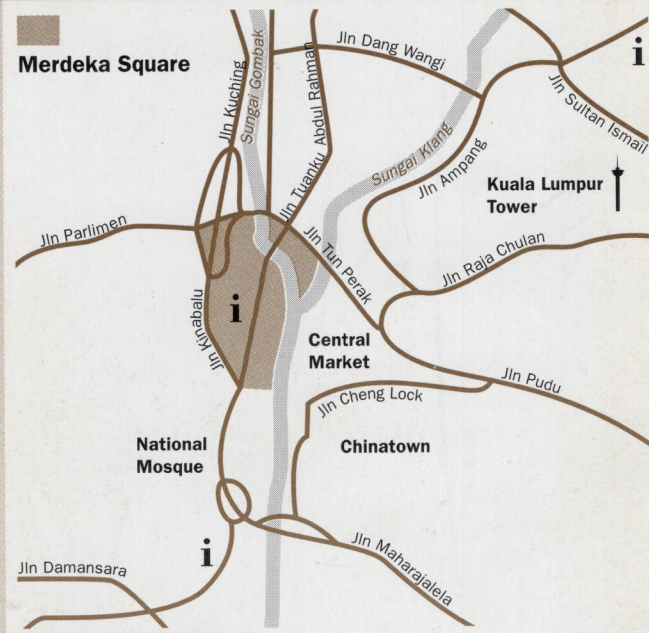
Tel 603 244 9273

Fax 603 245 7884

*Open Monday to Friday,  
10am to 4pm*



**BADAN WARISAN** MALAYSIA



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